



US GOVERNMENT – SUPPORTED EXIT POLL UPDATE

September 26, 2005

As part of its ongoing efforts to support the strengthening and expansion of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan, the United States government, represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is funding an exit poll to be conducted for the November 2005 Milli Majlis elections. The exit poll will be designed and conducted by an international team of experts led by PA Consulting Group.

PROGRESS REPORT

Design of the U.S. government-supported exit poll has begun, and is being conducted in a participatory manner between all members –international and Azerbaijani – of the PA Exit Poll Team. The reason for this is to help train and build the capacity of our Azerbaijani team members, so that they will be capable of conducting future exit polls on their own.

Selection of electoral constituencies and polling stations for inclusion in the exit poll has begun, using a random number selection generated by the STSS computer software program.

Recruitment of exit poll interviewers for the USAID/PA Exit Poll in the field has not yet begun. Initial screening of supervisors has begun in Baku. Recruitment is based on candidates' professional capabilities, educational level, and experience in conducting similar survey work in the past. Furthermore, recruitment procedures have been designed to ensure the political neutrality of the exit poll: members of political parties and movements, political campaign workers, and active supporters of specific candidates are not eligible.

THE PA AZERBAIJAN EXIT POLL TEAM

PA Consulting Group is one of the world's leading international consulting companies. PA has been conducting quantitative surveys and analysis for more than 25 years.

The PA Azerbaijan Exit Poll Team consists of a combination of international and Azerbaijani experts in the field of survey design and implementation. Collectively, its members have conducted over 1500 exit polls, both in the United States and abroad. The PA Azerbaijan Exit Poll Team includes:

Mr. Sheldon Gawiser: Mr. Gawiser has served as the Senior Pollster and Director of Elections for the NBC Network for 29 years and has conducted more than 750 state and national exit polls.

Dr. Evans Witt: Dr. Witt is one of the pioneers of exit polling. He designed and conducted the first national exit poll for the Associated Press in 1976 and has conducted more than 500 state and national exit polls.

In order to select local partners for the Azerbaijan exit poll, PA conducted a thorough evaluation of the Azerbaijani sociological survey sector. Among the information that PA evaluated for each organization was: its professional reputation, its history, its list of clients and projects, and other factors. The primary criteria that PA used to select its partners was each organization's ability to execute the project in line with four key principles: anonymity of participants, political neutrality, transparency of our methodology, and professionalism.

SORGU: SORGU, established in 1990, is the oldest public opinion research organization in Azerbaijan and has maintained an excellent reputation of high-quality and politically neutral research. SORGU has worked with international donor agencies, such as USAID/Caucasus and the World Bank, as well as other organizations, such as World Learning, Eurasia Fund, Transparency International, UNICEF, US Information Agency, and Intermedia. Ms. Tatyana Sulina will direct the work of SORGU staff.

International Center for Social Research (ICSR): The ICSR was established in 1995 as the Center for Social Research at the American University of Baku, Azerbaijan. Since 2000, it has operated as independent non-governmental, non-profit, and non-partisan research institution. ICSR promotes the development of the Social Sciences in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus Region through scientific contacts and joint research with local and international research centers and institutions, and curriculum and faculty development in Social Sciences. ICSR has close research contacts with a number of universities, research centers and research institutions in the U.S.A., Canada, Western and Eastern Europe, Japan, and CIS countries. ICSR has worked with the Soros and MacArthur Foundations, and has implemented research projects for the World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, and other international organizations.

Georgian Opinion Research Business International (GORBI): For this project, PA has invited GORBI to participate as technical advisors. GORBI has an excellent professional reputation for conducting high-quality survey research in politically sensitive climates, in a neutral and transparent fashion. Mr. Merab Pachulia, the President of GORBI, co-founded the first independent opinion research organization in Georgia, and has conducted work for the Radio Liberty Institute, the US Information Agency, Gallup UK, and the European Union since the early 1990's. GORBI is a member of ESOMAR and has conducted exit polls in Georgia for three separate elections. Mr. Pachulia has also served as a consultant for exit polls conducted for national elections in the Russian Federation. GORBI's work throughout the Caucasus Region is frequently cited in major print media (New York Times, LA Times, The Financial Times, Economist), as well as major television news organizations (CNN and BBC). GORBI conducts frequent survey work in Azerbaijan. GORBI will support PA's Azerbaijan exit poll effort in two critical ways: 1) by advising on the specific nuances of conducting exit polls in the Azerbaijani and Caucasian contexts; and 2) GORBI staff will provide professional, politically neutral supervision of Azerbaijani field operations.